

Shelter Commission on Housing and Wellbeing

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Following our attendance at the Commission's two consultation events in Glasgow and Edinburgh during November 2014 we decided to, firstly, offer a few observations on the Consultation Report itself, before, secondly, attaching our final SUII Report which was completed in early December 2014 although has as yet not been officially published. This short report usefully expands on the core argument we can offer to the Commission, namely that if the Commission opts to frame its report within the construct of housing, rather than home, then the capacity to draw on a wider range of wellbeing connections and synergies will be lost. At present, the Commission's consultation report adopts a very narrow housing policy focus, perhaps reflecting the interests of traditional housing lobby. By changing the lens to home, which was commonly the term used for housing policy prior to the 1970s, then the wider social care / health wellbeing agenda immediately becomes an intrinsic part of the debate. Following the Christie Commission and the Scottish Government's current review of the National Performance Framework it is critical to step outwith traditional policy silo's and take a more inclusive look at social challenges and problems within Scotland. Having a clearer understanding of the role a home plays in people's lives, and in enhancing, or challenging, their wellbeing is, in our opinion, critical in this regard.

Further, the focus on housing *per se* reduces the role human agency plays in such deliberations. In terms of developing new policy thinking it is clear the personalisation agenda has gained greater significance over time, certainly in social care but less so in health and housing. As public policy adapts and evolves, then it will increasingly have to consider people as unique individuals, exhibiting various capacities and needs, rather than primarily as numeric's within a policy spreadsheet.

By adopting the notion of home, and through pursuing our 'knowledge mobilisation' approach to generating new knowledge, then we also need to stretch out beyond the policy-makers to those who receive and pay for such services. To change policy in the ways being talked about, then there is a need to appreciate the power dynamics that currently hold policy within its current frame, and then offer opportunities for others to take some of that power, and in doing alter that frame.

Should you require any further information, or wish to meet with us to further explore our work, then please do not hesitate to contact either of us.

COMMENTS ON CONSULTATION REPORT

Changing the Terminology

Over the last 50 years we as a society have created a hierarchy of tenure, with home owners 'normalised', whilst private and then social renters are 'temporary' states or 'deviant' in some way. The use of the terms 'housing haves' and 'have nots' which refer to 'owners' and 'renters'

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respectfully, feeds into this normalisation of owner-occupiers and demonises renters. Academia as a whole, and the Commission, should aim for a more neutral terminology.

Similarly we are concerned that the narrative on aging is 'normative', and reflects traditional policy thinking. There is a much more heterogeneous experience of aging, and by adopting this traditional narrative you reinforce an aging pathway that for many will not be their experience. Its construction also reinforces primarily the health and social care narrative, but that is to the exclusion of others. Many people in old age experience a home life which is of their choosing, and may or may not require support to do this.

Finally, while the cost of housing is an important issue, the critical element in this calculation (for new build property) is land value. If the market for land changes, and the current proposals for land reform might bring this about, then the cost on new house construction could alter. Over time this may impact on the overall housing market. The fixed price and tenure position adopted by the Commission should be questioned, given that in the 1970s owner occupation was a minority tenure, and until 2002 the idea of a growing private rented sector was considered laughable.

Meeting the needs of an ageing society

Whilst older people prefer to remain in their own home, rather than moving into residential or nursing homes, this does not mean they **have** to stay in the family home, which may be too large to heat and maintain.

As mentioned earlier, older people are a heterogeneous group potentially covering a 40 year age span. Not all will thus need to move into 'care homes' or bungalows. A greater variety in affordable, smaller accommodation should be available to facilitate downsizing, preferably before there is a need for greater health care and support, to enable more efficient use of existing family homes.

Measurement

Linked to the point immediately above, we raised the question of whether our existing homes are fit for purpose for an ageing society. One option, although we include this with a degree of caution, is to include indicators in the Scottish Housing Quality Standard which measure lifetime homes standards, suitability or adaptability of properties. We say with caution because we would not want to develop a false impression of the 'poor' quality of housing stock based on the **possibility** that it **may** need to be adapted to accommodate an older person. However, perhaps this measure should only apply to new build stock, or housing occupied by people over 60/65? This issue would benefit from further consultation, and in this regard we would suggest the Commission looks at the 'Life-time' homes policies that have been pursued in both Sweden, and certain of the Länder in Germany. Under such programmes the issue of accessibility is not seen through the lens of adaptations, but as a requirement for all homes given mobility issues challenge mothers with prams and buggies as much as those with actual mobility issues.

Across a range of national indicators and surveys, measures of housing are limited and declining. They also tend to be driven by policy initiatives relating to the actual existing 'housing stock' rather than addressing the wellbeing aspects associated with living in a 'home'. This is an issue that we have been addressing through the 'Home not Housing' project, which is part of the SUII Programme on Wellbeing. Our findings (see attached report) will feed into the ongoing evaluation of the indicators and underlying measures of the Scottish Governments National Performance Framework. We also hope to take forward new work on measuring wellbeing within home and neighbourhood contexts.

One key survey that would benefit from the re-introduction of core housing and home measures relevant to wellbeing is Understanding Society (US). This survey is a panel survey of a representative sample of 40,000 households in the UK. It was established in 2009 and replaced the long-standing British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) which started in 1991. US is an exception survey in the UK because it is the only panel survey (i.e. the same people are interviewed each year) where data are collected annually. It, therefore, provides the best opportunity for longitudinal analysis, which is essential in understanding individual wellbeing and how that changes over time and, critically, across the life course. As our SUII work revealed there is a dynamic in relation to the home and wellbeing: the family home, can for some people, over time, become a source of great stress rather than wellbeing given heating and maintenance costs.

Table 1 shows the loss of housing indicators when the BHPS became subsumed into US. It should be noted that we have focussed on housing quality issues and some aspects of local neighbourhood conditions, so this does not cover broader wellbeing aspects associated with 'home'. It should also be noted that even where indicators are included in US, these may be part of a 'rotating module' and are not necessarily collected every year. A key point to make is that there is no 'housing' module currently included, nor any indication of one for the first 10 waves of the survey.

Covered in US (broad topics)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing tenure Regional location, and urban/rural Mortgage and rent payments, receipt of housing benefit Value of property (home owners) Items included in rent (eg water, fuel, whether property furnished or not) Month/Year moved to present address Desire to move locations Relationships with neighbours and connection to neighbourhood Number of rooms in accommodation Keeping the home warm, and fuel poverty. Only one question addresses the condition of the home: house in decent state of repair

Indicators in the BHPS that have been lost
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likes present neighbourhood Welfare services (home help/meals on wheels) Importance of: Owning own home Standard of local services: Schools/Medical/Transport/Shopping/Leisure Suitability of area for raising children Advice obtainable locally Income: rent from lodgers/other property Neighbourhood good/bad place to live Why N'hood good/bad place Satisfaction with: house/flat Type of accommodation Institutional accommodation rented Mortgage includes protection policy/structure insurance/contents insurance Housing payments required borrowing or cutbacks Been 2+ months late with housing payment Accom: has separate kitchen / bathroom / indoor toilet / terrace or garden / Accom: shortage of space Accom: noise from neighbours / street noise

Accom: not enough light Accom: lack of adequate heating Accom: condensation / leaky roof / damp walls, floors etc / rot in windows, floors Accom: pollution/environmental problems Accom: vandalism or crime Household member owns other property Value of other property Would like to keep house well decorated
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The Scottish Household Survey also contains a good range of indicators which may be used as examples for including in US. For example, type of accommodation, what level the accommodation is on; details of previous accommodation; a suite of questions on homelessness; and opinions of neighbourhood.

The Commission’s focus on factors that may impact on wellbeing, fails to define what it means by wellbeing. It also does not address the issues of how ‘subjective wellbeing’ could be measured. There are several robust measures not just of ‘subjective wellbeing, but the key components that contribute to it including GHQ12; Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) :

General Health Questionnaire: GHQ12
Been able to concentration Been losing of sleep Been playing a useful role Been capable of making decisions Been constantly under strain Having problem overcoming difficulties Can enjoy day-to-day activities Ability to face problems Been feeling unhappy or depressed Been losing confidence Believe in self-worth Generally feeling happy
WEMWBS
Been feeling optimistic about the future Been feeling useful Been feeling relaxed Been feeling interested in other people Had energy to spare Been dealing with problems well Been thinking clearly Been feeling good about myself Been feeling close to other people Been feeling confident Been able to make my own mind up about things Been feeling loved Been interested in new things Been feeling cheerful

As our attached report shows, being able to measure the impact of home and neighbourhood on wellbeing is not as difficult as some people would suggest. However, it is also clear more work and thought needs expended on such an exercise.